

Dear Members of the Legislature:

I appreciate the ability of members of the public to comment on the budget for the 2023-24 fiscal year of the state. I would encourage the legislature to take steps to aid our localities.

Aid to Localities

I urge the legislature to ensure that aid is directed to towns, not just cities and counties. In our town, we have the luxury of a full time police department and a fire department. Many of our police officers are emergency medical technicians, for example. Our school system is top class. However, we pay significant property taxes. Ensuring that towns and school districts in Westchester County get aid is necessary to further hold down property taxes.

Reject Executive Overreach

However, the Legislature needs to reassert its role in passing legislation. It should be done by rejecting the areas that the governor includes in the executive budget. I urge the legislature to ensure that these areas are excluded. Legislation recommended in the "Article VII" non appropriation bills should not be bills that can be enacted outside the budget.

For example, Part Z of the Public Protection and General Government Bill would stagger initial terms for the Commission of Ethics. This has absolutely no fiscal impact, and could be done outside the budget. And in the Transportation, Economic Development, and Environmental Conservation Bill, Part NN which is the Pleasure Vessel Equipment Standards would have the same impact. These are not exhaustive examples, and the Legislature should reject any such effort by the governor to include such legislation in the budget.

Part TT in the Transportation, Economic Development, and Environmental Conservation Bill, the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act, should be done outside of the budget. Since it would allow a specific county to unify their utility rates, it should be enacted with a home rule message from Suffolk County. In addition, Section 1, clause f specifically requires that the county be permitted to make a fair return on utilities and use the profits for any lawful purpose.

Spending Increases

While listening to the budget hearings, it is very clear that the increase in spending requested by advocates and others appears to be expanding state spending. With the covid aid to the state running out and a negative outlook in the economy, we need to take a serious look at what happens with the fiscal cliff. The one house Assembly Budget in Fiscal Year 2022-23 included over a ten percent increase in operating funds.¹ Instead, we should ensure that state spending is kept down so that we do not have a drastic increase in state expenditures.

¹ <https://www.nyasembly.gov/Reports/WAM/AssemblyBudgetProposal/2022/2022AssemblySummary.pdf>

Sincerely,
Theo Allen